

David Salisbury
Director, Medicine
Transport Canada
330 Sparks Street
Ottawa, ON K1A 0N5

Subject: Inquiries Regarding Mental Health Initiatives for Commercial Professional Pilots

Dear Mr. Salisbury,

I trust this letter finds you well. I am writing to express our organization's concerns and seek information regarding the initiatives undertaken by Transport Canada to address mental health matters among commercial professional pilots.

We acknowledge the critical role that the Director, Medicine, and Transport Canada play in ensuring the safety and well-being of the aviation community, particularly in matters related to pilot health. The mental health of professional pilots is an area of paramount importance, and we commend the strides made by aviation authorities worldwide, including the Federal Aviation Administration (FAA), in addressing and breaking down barriers that impede pilots from reporting mental health issues.

Our specific inquiry pertains to understanding the measures and initiatives Transport Canada is planning to implement to create an environment that encourages pilots to come forward and report mental health concerns without fear of punitive actions such as the potential loss of their license. We are particularly interested in learning about any programs, policies, or support mechanisms that may be similar to those enacted by the FAA to foster a culture of openness and trust.

It is our concern that pilots may be hesitant to report mental health issues due to apprehensions about the impact on their professional credentials. As advocates for the well-being of our members, we believe that fostering a supportive environment is crucial to addressing mental health concerns proactively.

We appreciate your attention to this matter and look forward to receiving information on the initiatives Transport Canada is planning or has already implemented to support the mental health of commercial professional pilots. Additionally, we would welcome the opportunity for a meeting or discussion to further explore this issue and collaborate on initiatives that promote the mental well-being of our aviation professionals.

Thank you for your time and consideration. We value the ongoing partnership between the College of Professional Pilots of Canada and Transport Canada in ensuring the highest standards of safety and professionalism in the Canadian aviation industry.

Sincerely,

Anthony Kokai-Kuun, B.Sc., ATP, President
College of Professional Pilots of Canada



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March 22, 2024

Anthony Kokai-Kuun
President
College of Professional Pilots of Canada
455 boulevard de la Gappe, Suite 201
Gatineau, QC
J8T 0E1

Anthony Kokai-Kuun,

Thank you for your letter dated 15 February 2024 inquiring about any measures and initiatives Transport Canada (TC) is planning to implement to create an environment that encourages pilots to come forward and report mental health.

TC shares your concern about perceived or real barriers that prevent pilots from seeking care and disclosing information to Transport Canada about health issues, including mental health issues.

The purpose of TC's aviation medical certification program is to ensure that pilots are medically fit in order to prevent aircraft accidents due to medically-related human factors. It is vital that pilots meet the medical Standards established in the Canadian Aviation Regulations (CARs) through which Canada complies with the standards established by the International Civil Aviation Organization (ICAO) which ensure global aviation safety.

Transport Canada continues to be a leader amongst international aviation medicine regulators in enabling the safe certification of applicants with a variety of otherwise disqualifying medical conditions. For instance, Canada was the first ICAO member state to permit pilots with successfully treated depression on anti-depressant medications to be medically certified for aviation duties.

TC's goal is to destigmatize mental health issues, encourage pilots to seek early treatment, and enable entry and return to aviation duties after successful treatment.

TC is involved in numerous efforts which directly and indirectly promote care-seeking and open disclosure of health issues. These include:

- Ongoing development of policies and practices which reflect the most current understanding of medical conditions. Updated policies provide clarity on pathways to certification in the context of health issues and contribute to transparency and consistency in decision-making;
- Continued case-by-case file management involving specialist physicians when necessary to consider individual circumstances and options for risk mitigation;

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- Program transformation and modernization to contribute to timeliness of certification decision-making;
- Continued development of tools to enhance communications between TC and pilots, including the recently launched applicant portal and online query webform;
- Ongoing liaison with the Canadian aviation sector, including airlines, flight schools, associations, and labour groups, to ensure that aviation medicine policies and processes are understood, to identify priority pilot files for assessment, and to solicit suggestions for program enhancement. TC recently undertook consultation from June to August 2023 through the Canadian Aviation Regulation Advisory Council network; and,
- Involvement in ICAO working groups that are developing updated guidance to harmonize the international approach to mental health and well-being in pilots, including the ICAO Aviation Medicine and ICAO Mental Health Working Groups.

Of note, TC is participating as an invited observer on the United States Federal Aviation Administration (FAA) Aviation Rulemaking Committee (ARC). The ARC is currently drafting recommendations for the FAA specifically aimed at reducing barriers that prevent pilots from seeking care for and disclosing mental health issues. Once the recommendations of the ARC are published, TC will review them to see what measures might be applicable to the Canadian context.

We appreciate your letter on this important topic of mutual interest, and hope you are reassured by TC's efforts.

With best regards,

Directors General Office
Civil Aviation
Transport Canada